

Missouri's Cup of TEA

Tea comes in many varieties including herbal, iced, breakfast and black. For the Missouri Department of Transportation, however, green is the type of TEA it hopes Congress serves up this year.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, the federal transportation-funding bill also known as TEA-21, will expire Sept. 30, 2003. Enacted in 1998, TEA-21 established precedent-setting funding levels that resulted in vital improvements to transportation systems nationwide.

"TEA-21 certainly brought more money to Missouri than previous federal transportation acts," says MoDOT Chief Engineer Kevin Keith. "With that funding and matching state funds, we have been able to complete much-needed projects throughout our state. Reauthorization of TEA-21 needs to provide increased transportation funding so we can continue working at this level."

Keith cited four-laning projects on routes 21, 36, 60, 63, 71, 150

and 169 as examples of TEA-21's value to Missouri. He also said major bridges at Hannibal, Cape Girardeau, Lexington and the Lake of the Ozarks became reality in large part because of the most recent federal transportation-funding package.

MoDOT has been working with Missouri's United States Senators and Representatives for several months to ensure the state is treated fairly in new federal-transportation legislation being drafted this year. The bill will span multiple years again and determine how much federal-transportation funding each state receives.

Currently, Missouri pays more to the federal government than it gets back in transportation funding making it a "donor state." By cooperating extensively with Missouri's representatives in Congress, MoDOT hopes to increase the amount of money that comes back home.

"A majority of MoDOT's construction dollars come from the federal government," says Kent Van Landuyt, MoDOT TEA-21 Reauthorization coordinator. "Missouri's

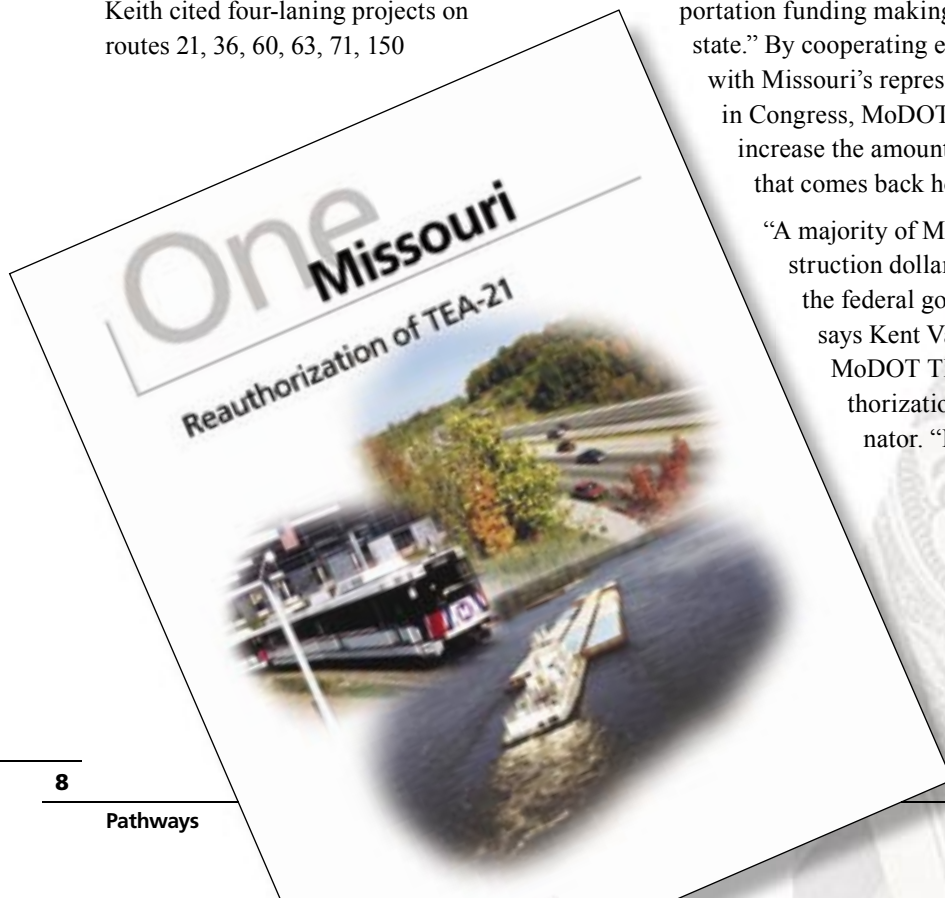


Route 63 dedication

share has amounted to approximately \$795 million annually in recent years. We are hopeful that number will go up under the new federal legislation."

States are guaranteed to get back 90.5 percent of their contributions to the Highway Trust Fund, which is the repository for federal fuel taxes. This amount is known as the minimum guarantee. Missouri received the minimum guarantee each of the first five fiscal years under TEA-21.

Missouri's congressional delegation has expressed interest in getting the 90.5 minimum-guarantee percentage increased. Sen. Kit Bond, chairman of a key subcommittee, has indicated he would like to see Missouri's return rate increase to at least 95 percent. The Senate Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, which



By Shane Peck

Bond chairs, will write the highway portion of the reauthorization act in the senate.

"It is vital that MoDOT works closely with all members of Missouri's Congressional Delegation to ensure that maximum possible return on taxpayer dollars," says Jay Wunderlich, MoDOT Governmental Affairs director. "Our federal representatives have a great deal of influence in Washington, D.C.,

an increase in federal funding for highways. The commission's position, as stated in the resolution, is that the president and congress must approve funding of \$34 billion in FY 2004 and at least \$45 billion by FY 2009 in order for Missouri to address the state's pressing highway needs.

Approximately \$32 billion federal dollars went toward highways in FY 2002. Recently, the president signed the FY 2003 budget that kept highway funding at that same level. This highway funding level could set a baseline for what will be in the TEA-21 reauthorization act.

MoDOT has provided a list of projects to Missouri's congressional delegation for possible inclusion in the new version of TEA-21. The department, however, has made it clear that additional discretionary money must be provided for these improvements. A major upgrade of Interstate 70 and a new Mississippi River Bridge in St. Louis top the list of priorities for additional federal money.

Accomplishing these goals will require the federal government to pour a great deal more "green" into Missouri's highways. By working with congress and spreading the word about how this all affects the state,



Route 36 between Utica and Chillicothe



Mark Twain Memorial Bridge in Hannibal



MoDOT officials and congressional representatives have been working hard to return federal dollars to Missouri.

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that it would take about \$75 billion per year to sufficiently address highway needs nationwide. This level of funding, however, is not considered realistic.

In addition to setting funding levels, past transportation bills passed by congress have included "demonstration projects." Funding is earmarked in the legislation specifically for these projects, and the money can't be used for anything else.

MoDOT hopes to end up with a good seat at the TEA party.

More information about MoDOT's TEA-21 reauthorization efforts is available at www.modot.org. ■

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and we are committed to providing them with the information needed to maximize that leverage."

The Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission, MoDOT's governing board, passed a resolution in February calling for

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